



## **The 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council**

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June 3, 2010

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### **Budget and Finance Committee expresses concerns on how to plan for the Fiscal Year 2011 budget given high court's opinion**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – The Budget and Finance Committee of the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council met today to discuss the Fiscal Year 2011 budget report prepared by the Office of Budget and Management and Office of the Controller but was concerned on how to proceed because the Navajo Nation Supreme Court's opinion held Council was not to begin any restructuring efforts.

Base on the high court's opinion, budgeting for a 24 member Council would challenge the court's opinion, which caused concern among committee members on how to proceed.

"There have been some suggestions on how to proceed," Council Delegate LoRenzo Bates (Upper Fruitland) said. "Do you have those options as part of your presentation? What we are hearing is that Council would consider a budget which would deal with the first quarter (Oct. 1 to mid Jan.) based on the high court's opinion. The budget Council prepares would be a total budget for fiscal year 2011 but a separate budget for 88 members during the first quarter and one for 24 in the last three quarters."

Bates also questioned where more money would come from once the 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council starts to restructure the legislative branch as more staffers would be necessary.

In response, Dominic Beyal, executive director for the Office of Management and Budget, said budgeting could be for an 88 Council during the first quarter and budgeting for a 24 Council for FY 2011. He also said there were other options.

"The first three options only talk about current budget knowing that the new Council would revise the budget," Beyal said. "The other way is to start moving to reduce all three branch monies knowing that was the intention anyway."

Council Delegate Pete Ken Atcitty (Shiprock) questioned whether if it is a significant issue for the committee to proceed with its normal budgetary process and also asked if the budget instructions manual needed possible revision for the new council.

In answer to Atcitty, Beyal said the way the budget manual reads is fairly generic and applicable to any organization.

"In that sense, I don't think the manual will have to be significantly revised unless during discussion there is a fairly radical view causing the manual to be redone in some way," Beyal added. "I would

assume that this committee as well as my office would still be developing options. We got to. We need to give the new council something to work with.”

Council Delegate Hoskie Kee (Little Water/Baca/Prewitt/Casamero Lake) voiced his concerns of the committee’s predicament and said, “The main thing we are trying to do is set the base planning amount – let the three branch chiefs fight over the percentage – a done deal. Then, whatever amount they come up with will be up to them to budget items for a 88 or 24 member Council for the legislative.”

“It is my understanding that his committee at its last meeting said it would sit down for planning allocation amounts for the three branches, so I believe we need to sit down some time and proceed from there,” Council Delegate Leonard Chee (Birdsprings/Leupp/Tolani Lake) said. “I would like to see us give money to the chapters. I think the high court with all its wisdom did not take a look at that.”

Kee motioned to accept the report, which the committee accepted, 7-0. A work session is scheduled on June 7 to determine and establish planning allocation amounts for the next fiscal year.

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